

## The Distribution of Black Physicians in the United States, 1967

M. ALFRED HAYNES, M.D.

*Executive Director, National Medical Association Foundation*

**T**wo per cent of all physicians in the United States are black.<sup>1</sup> Serious efforts are now being made to correct this underrepresentation, and with these efforts there has been increased interest in information on black physicians. The last paper on this subject was published in 1944 and dealt with the distribution of black physicians in 1942.<sup>2</sup> This paper, 25 years later, presents the most reliable information available on the distribution of black physicians with special reference to the schools where they are trained, the state where they are located, their specialty, type of practice and affiliation with the American Medical Association.

### SOURCES AND RELIABILITY OF DATA

The data provided represent a cooperative effort of the American Medical Association and the National Medical Association. The names were taken from the 1968 National Medical Association Directory, but this directory does not include all black physicians, nor are all persons listed in the directory financially active. On the basis of comparison with census data, the NMA list appears to be about 83 per cent complete, in which case the total number of black physicians will approximate 6,000. The error may range from zero to 100 per cent, depending upon the state. For example, in the state of Vermont, where there are few black physicians and no local affiliate of the NMA, the listing of zero is known to be incorrect. However, the characteristics of the 83 per cent sample can be considered to give a reasonable representation of all black physicians. The characteristics were obtained from the data bank maintained by the American Medical Association.

### DISTRIBUTION BY NUMBER, SEX AND AGE

The total number of black physicians analyzed was 4,805. The estimate for 1942 was 3,810 and for 1932 it was 3,985.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that the growth in number of black physicians has lagged behind the growth of the black population. It is estimated that 92 per cent of the black physicians are male.

Nintey-three per cent of all graduates of U. S. medical schools are male.<sup>3</sup>

### DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK PHYSICIANS BY SCHOOL OF GRADUATION

Table 1 indicates that 83 per cent of the 4,805 black physicians graduated from Howard University and Meharry Medical College. All other United States medical schools combined graduated only 15 per cent.

TABLE 1.—DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK PHYSICIANS  
BY SCHOOL OF GRADUATION, 1967.

<i>School</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
<i>Total Graduates</i>	4,805	100.0
Howard University College of Medicine	2,186	45.5
Meharry Medical College	1,822	37.9
All other U. S. schools	726	15.1
Canadian medical schools	19	0.4
Foreign medical schools	52	1.1

Table 2 gives a list of the predominantly white schools which are responsible for more than 20 black graduates registered with the National Medical Association. The schools are ranked by the number of graduates. The midwestern schools top the list.

It is probably that graduates of predominantly white schools are less likely to be registered with the National Medical Association, so that the numbers given in Table 2 may underrepresent the number of black graduates from these schools.

### DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK PHYSICIANS BY STATE

California, New York and the District of Columbia claim the highest concentration of black physicians (Table 3). Since neither California nor New York has trained a significant number of the black physicians practicing there, these concentrations are the result of migration. Howard University graduates tend to migrate to New York

and Meharry medical graduates to California. Seventeen per cent of the Howard University graduates have migrated to New York and 17 per cent have remained in Washington, D. C. Fourteen per cent of the Meharry graduates have migrated to California and 7 per cent have remained in Tennessee. Compared with the 1942 data, California has increased its population of black physicians by about nine-fold and has risen to first place from a relatively low position. In Illinois, Tennessee, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas the numbers of black physicians are less than 25 years ago.

TABLE 2.—PREDOMINANTLY WHITE MEDICAL SCHOOLS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRAINING MORE THAN 20 BLACK GRADUATES

University of Illinois College of Medicine	57
University of Michigan Medical School	48
Wayne State University School of Medicine	38
Indiana University School of Medicine	35
Ohio State University College of Medicine	30
New York University School of Medicine	27
Harvard Medical School	23
Northwestern University Medical School	22
Loma Linda University School of Medicine	22
Chicago Medical School	21

#### DISTRIBUTION BY TYPE OF PRACTICE, ORGANIZATION AND MAJOR PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

Black physicians are less likely to practice in groups than physicians in general. Only two per cent of the black physicians practice in groups, but 9.5 per cent of all physicians practice in this way.<sup>3</sup>

Table 4 compares the distribution of black physicians by major professional activity with that of all United States physicians. Seventy-three per cent of black physicians and 65 per cent of all physicians are involved in patient care. Sixteen per cent of all physicians are in training programs, but only 9 per cent of the black physicians are in this category. This underrepresentation of black physicians in training programs is consistent with the smaller percentage of specialists.

#### DISTRIBUTION BY SPECIALTY AND BOARD CERTIFICATION

Thirty-nine per cent of black physicians and 23 per cent of all physicians are in general practice.

TABLE 3.—DISTRIBUTION OF NMA PHYSICIANS BY REGION AND STATE, 1967

<i>Division State</i>	<i>Total NMA Members</i>	<i>Division State</i>	<i>Total NMA Members</i>
<i>Total Physicians 4,805</i>			
New England	93	East South Central	275
Connecticut	41	Alabama	61
Maine	3	Kentucky	37
Massachusetts	43	Mississippi	44
New Hampshire	0	Tennessee	133
Rhode Island	6	West South Central	244
Vermont	0	Arkansas	17
Middle Atlantic	976	Louisiana	62
New Jersey	178	Oklahoma	30
New York	562	Texas	135
Pennsylvania	236	Mountain	29
East North Central	921	Arizona	12
Illinois	265	Colorado	8
Indiana	99	Idaho	0
Michigan	270	Montana	0
Ohio	256	Nevada	3
Wisconsin	31	New Mexico	5
West North Central	197	Utah	0
Iowa	12	Wyoming	1
Kansas	23	Pacific	598
Minnesota	19	Alaska	0
Missouri	135	California	574
Nebraska	7	Hawaii	4
North Dakota	1	Oregon	6
South Dakota	0	Washington	14
South Atlantic	1084	Possessions	22
Delaware	11	Puerto Rico	11
District of Columbia	417	Virgin Islands	11
Florida	82	Address Unknown	84
Georgia	86	Overseas	262
Maryland	163	Foreign Countries	20
North Carolina	130		
South Carolina	45		
Virginia	138		
West Virginia	12		

The remainder limit their practice. Table 5 shows the number in certain specialties for both groups and shows the percentage of these specialists who are black. Black physicians constitute from 1 to 2 per cent of these specialists. Table 6 shows the number of black physicians by specialty and specialty board certification.

Thirty-one per cent of all physicians and 22 per cent of black physicians are board certified. In the categories listed in Table 5 the percentage

TABLE 4.—DISTRIBUTION OF ACTIVE PHYSICIANS BY MAJOR PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES—1967

	<i>Black Physicians</i>		<i>U.S. Physicians</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Total Active	4,710	100	294,072	100
Patient Care	3,427	73	190,079	65
Other Practice	836	18	57,137	19
Training Programs	447	9	46,856	16

TABLE 5.—NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF BLACK SPECIALISTS OF CERTAIN CATEGORIES

	<i>U.S. Physicians 1967</i>	<i>Black Physicians 1967</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Internal Medicine	42,325	540	1
General Surgery	29,687	479	2
Psychiatry	19,749	275	1
Obstetrics and Gynecology	17,964	425	1
Pediatrics	17,614	280	2
Radiology	10,877	109	1

TABLE 6.—NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP BY SPECIALTY AND SPECIALTY BOARD CERTIFICATION—1967

	<i>Total NMA Members (100.0%)</i>	<i>Board Certified<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Per Cent Board Certified</i>	<i>Not Board Certified</i>
Total Physicians	4,805	1,074	22.4	3,731
Allergy	4	0	0.0	4
Anesthesiology	79	27	34.2	52
Aerospace (Aviation) Medicine	9	0	0.0	9
Cardiovascular Diseases	14	3	21.4	11
Child Psychiatry	25	8	32.0	17
Colon and Rectal Surgery	1	1	100.0	0
Diagnostic Roentgenology	1	1	100.0	0
Dermatology	49	22	44.9	27
Gastroenterology	8	2	25.0	6
General Practice	1,867	16	0.9	1,851
General Preventive Medicine	10	6	60.0	4
General Surgery	479	206	43.0	273
Internal Medicine	540	110	20.4	430
Neurological Surgery	15	3	20.0	12
Neurology	22	5	22.7	17
Obstetrics and Gynecology	425	152	35.8	273
Occupational Medicine	10	3	30.0	7
Ophthalmology	78	38	48.7	40
Orthopedic Surgery	65	16	24.6	49
Otolaryngology	33	10	30.3	23
Pathology	56	31	55.4	25
Pediatrics	280	143	51.1	137
Pediatric Allergy	1	0	0.0	1
Pediatric Cardiology	2	2	100.0	0
Physician Medicine and Rehabilitation	22	7	31.8	15
Plastic Surgery	6	3	50.0	3
Psychiatry	275	81	29.5	194
Public Health	19	7	36.8	12
Pulmonary Disease	8	0	0.0	8
Radiology	109	74	67.9	35
Thoracic Surgery	14	12	85.7	2
Urology	78	40	51.3	38
Not Recognized (1)	65	34	52.3	31
Unspecified	136	11	8.1	125

(1) Includes 55 Administrative Medicine.

of black specialists who are board certified varies from 20 to 68 per cent (Table 7). These percentages are lower than the corresponding percentages for all specialists. In both cases the percentage of board certified physicians was calculated on the basis of the number of certificates, rather than the number of physicians with certification.

TABLE 7.—PERCENTAGE OF BLACK SPECIALISTS WHO ARE BOARD CERTIFIED—1967

<i>Specialty</i>	<i>% Board Certified (Black)</i>	<i>% Board Certified (U.S.)</i>
Internal Medicine	20	38
Psychiatry	30	36
Obstetrics and Gynecology	36	46
General Surgery	43	48
Pediatrics	51	57
Radiology	68	68

#### DISTRIBUTION BY MEMBERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Sixty-nine per cent of all physicians are AMA members and 55 per cent of all NMA members are members of the American Medical Association. Of the states with the highest concentration of black physicians, California and New York have about 66 per cent of their group as members of the AMA, while in the District of Columbia only 27 per cent are members. California and New York have compulsory membership in the AMA for all members belonging to their country, and

state societies. If the three southern regions (South Atlantic, East South Central and West South Central) are excluded, 61 per cent of NMA members are members of the American Medical Association.

#### SUMMARY

Only 2 per cent of all physicians are black. Howard University College of Medicine and Meharry Medical College graduate about 83 per cent of the black physicians. Of the predominantly white schools, the University of Illinois graduated the largest number of black physicians who are members of the NMA. Black physicians are more highly concentrated in California, New York and Washington, D. C. They are less likely to practice in groups and more likely to be general practitioners. Internal medicine claims more specialists than any other specialty, but only 20 per cent of these are board certified. Fifty-five per cent of all NMA members are members of the AMA.

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